

For Immediate Release

December 17, 2004

Applications for Wildlife Habitat Improvement Sought

Colchester, Vt..... Vermont landowners interested in improving wildlife habitat on their property may apply at any time to enter into an agreement to receive cost share funding at all of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field offices throughout Vermont. Sign ups are allowed on a continuous basis. However, applications must be received by the field office by February 1, 2005 to be considered for this year's funding.

Under the 2002 Farm Bill, the voluntary Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) encourages creation of quality habitats that support wildlife populations of national, state and local significance. Through WHIP, NRCS provides technical assistance and up to 75% of the cost of wildlife habitat improvement practices for restoration and management of native ecosystems.

These ecosystems include riparian or river corridors, wetlands, grasslands, early successional (young woodlands) and old field habitat, rare and sensitive species habitat, and other rare and significant Vermont habitats.

Applicants will be ranked to compete for limited funding based upon habitat quality and quantity restored. NRCS will work with the participant to develop a wildlife habitat development plan which provides the basis of the cost-share agreement between NRCS and the participant. The agreements are usually five to ten years in duration depending upon the practices to be implemented.

For more information contact your local NRCS field office located at the nearest USDA Service Center. NRCS is listed in the phone book under United States Government – Agriculture Department.